

28 JANUARY 1976

## The death of Richard Welch

Norman Kempster suggested that the death of Richard Welch in Athens had been deftly exploited by the CIA and that the nation's press had "swallowed the bait" of a CIA stratagem to blame the Fifth Estate and its publication *Counter-Spy* for Welch's murder. I do not agree with all he says, but Mr. Kempster makes his points convincingly, and his article reflects the objectivity and fairness which have marked his coverage of intelligence activities.

Mr. Kempster also quotes my statement, made on behalf of the Association of Retired Intelligence Officers, that Welch's death "became inevitable" when a few American ex-intelligence officers joined Philip Agee in his sordid campaign of identifying American intelligence officials abroad.

For the record, my statement was not a hasty reaction to Welch's death. Last summer I wrote an article expressing my concern that "... a vigilante group calling itself the Fifth Estate ... inevitably (is) going to be responsible for the unnecessary death of an American intelligence officer abroad. ..."

My article was printed in an in-

house publication of The Association of Retired Intelligence Officers after repeated efforts to have it printed in the public media. The Star's "Comment" section, for instance, declined it last August.

I certainly don't know who pulled the trigger when Richard Welch was killed. But until more facts are known, I believe it reasonable to entertain the notion that the Fifth Estate and *Counter-Spy* may have played some role, however indirectly.

Mr. Kempster was accurate in quoting me as saying the death of a CIA officer became inevitable when Agee and his friends began their mischief. That was not a hasty reaction to the tragic news from Athens, but the reiteration of a prediction made before. When I expressed my concern about the Fifth Estate and *Counter-Spy* six months before his death, I did not know it would be my good friend Dick Welch who would be gunned down.

David Atlee Phillips  
President

Association of Retired Intelligence Officers

Washington, D.C.